



## **Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon OFFICE OF THE BISHOP**

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January 7, 2021  
Saint André Bessette

### **Day of Prayer for Reverence for Life: Sunday, January 31, 2021**

#### **Dear Clergy, Religious, and Lay Faithful of the Diocese of Saskatoon:**

The day of prayer for Reverence for Life will be celebrated in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon on Sunday, January 31, 2021, providing our faith communities with an opportunity for prayers, reflection and discussion about the value of the precious gift of human life.

Most of the year 2020 was marked by dealing with the terrible scourge of the COVID-19 pandemic – a health crisis that we are still dealing with, although there seems to be a light at the end of the tunnel. In reference to the pandemic, Pope Francis stated recently in *Fratelli Tutti*,

*“...the pandemic unexpectedly erupted, exposing our false securities. ...for all our hyper-connectivity, we witnessed a fragmentation that made it more difficult to resolve problems that affect us all. Anyone who thinks that the only lesson to be learned was the need to improve what we were already doing, or to refine existing systems and regulations, is denying reality.”*

Indeed, many things should not go back to the way they were – and one of the things that calls out for change is protection for the unborn and most vulnerable!

Canada continues to deal with the tragic repercussions of the removal of abortion from the Criminal Code. We now mark the 32<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the Supreme Court of Canada decision in the Morgentaler case on January 28, 1988, which removed all remaining restrictions on abortion in Canada. Incredibly applauded by many in our society, these moments in our nation’s history hold within them the tragic reality of millions of lost lives.

Victims of abortion include the unborn children who are killed, but also the mothers, fathers and families left wounded after an abortion. The community is also weakened and damaged as the weakest and most vulnerable among us are not valued and protected.

As the Canadian government now moves along Bill C7 which seeks to expand access to doctor-assisted suicide, also known as “MAiD” – the words of the Holy Father only a few years ago ring prophetic:

*“The victims of this [throwaway] culture are precisely the weakest and most fragile human beings – the unborn, the poorest, the sick and elderly, the seriously handicapped, etc. – who are in danger of being ‘thrown away’, expelled from a system that must be efficient at all costs.”*

In this statement, Pope Francis went on to call forth all people of good will to continue the steady work to turn our culture from one of convenience and short-sightedness, to a cultural movement that seeks - through good will and honest reflection - the realization of a truly human culture. As he states:

*“It is necessary to raise awareness and form the lay faithful, in whatever state, especially those engaged in the field of politics, so that they may think in accord with the Gospel and the social doctrine of the church and act consistently by dialoguing and collaborating with those who, in sincerity and intellectual honesty, share – if not the faith – at least a similar vision of mankind and society and its ethical consequences.” (P. Francis’s speech to Dignitatis Humanae Institute Dec. 7, 2013)*

Indeed, this effort is at the service of every person on the planet! If we do not engage in calling each other to a greater and fuller humanity, we should then not be surprised at the larger deterioration of a culture of human care and respect.

Today we are more aware than ever of the fragility of environment, and the inter-relationship of all people and all creation. In *Laudato Si* (June 2015), Pope Francis reminds us that reverence for all human life – especially the most vulnerable and unprotected – cannot be separated from concern and care of creation. As the pope states, *“Since everything is interrelated, concern for the protection of nature is also incompatible with the justification of abortion. How can we genuinely teach the importance of concern for other vulnerable beings, however troublesome or inconvenient they may be, if we fail to protect a human embryo, even when its presence is uncomfortable and creates difficulties?” (Laudato Si, #120)*

The Holy Father reminds us that inconsistency about care of the human person will affect our stewardship of creation. *“When we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities – to offer just a few examples – it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself; everything is connected.” (LS #117)*

As I stated in my letter of last year, current advances in science, genetics and embryology clearly show the distinct humanity of each unborn child, which comes into existence at conception. Each new, distinct human person shares the fundamental human right to life that we as Canadians celebrate and support on so many other fronts. Failing to recognize that right has left our country damaged – not only in the missing and lost lives of millions of unborn children - but in removing ‘the heart’ from our society. Devaluing

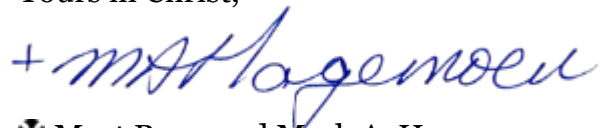
human life at any age or stage has inexorably led to the legalization and growing acceptance in our country of euthanasia as “Medical Aid in Death”: our lives seem to cease to have meaning and value as we face the fear of not being ‘useful’, or that we are a ‘problem’ to those on whom we rely for care. This loss of ‘heart’ is also the root cause of so many other evils in our midst: poverty, hunger, discrimination, injustice, racism, and violence.

Sisters and brothers, let us respond to *loss of heart* by holding steady to the hope of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: *the Sacred Heart for our world*. Let us join together in our common prayer for Reverence for Life on January 30<sup>th</sup> and throughout this year.

In this Year of St. Joseph, let us also appeal to the earthly father who faithfully and diligently cared for the young Saviour, and who inspires us in the way of always doing the good that should be done in caring for all God’s people entrusted to our care and service.

And may our every action always lovingly affirm the deep and sacred value of every human person. *Sisters and brothers, we again pray that as a nation we may re-discover our heart!*

Yours in Christ,



✠ Most Reverend Mark A. Hagemoen